

**THE**

# **HISTORIAN**

**OF HANCOCK COUNTY**

**Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi**

**June 2007**

## **JUNE HAPPENINGS**

Since the May luncheon was cancelled because of the dedication of the new Bay Saint Louis bridge, we eagerly anticipate the June luncheon meeting, which will be held on Thursday, June 21, 2007. Sherry Pace, Madison County photographer and author of *Historic Churches of Mississippi* and *Victorian Houses of Mississippi*, will be the speaker this month. She has planned a slide show and discussion of her books. Reservations may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call by noon on Wednesday, June 20, 2007, to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating which is limited to sixty people. The price for the lunch is \$7.00 payable at the door. As always Prima has a delicious menu planned!

## **2007 HALLOWEEN TOUR**

Although it's only June, it's not too early to begin planning for the 2007 Halloween Tour. We need volunteers to serve as actors, guides, hosts/hostesses, etc., so that this year's tour will be one of the best ever. If you'd like to volunteer, please call the Kate Lobrano House at 467-4090.



Pearl River at Gainesville

## **THE NOTORIOUS OF HANCOCK COUNTY**

Edited by  
Eddie Coleman

Local stories and legends abound about the infamous Jean Lafitte and his buccaneers who frequented the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and surrounding bayous and rivers of Mississippi and Louisiana. Natives of the area are even intrigued that he may have built the famous "Pirate House" which stood on North Beach Boulevard in Waveland prior to

its destruction by Hurricane Camille in 1969. However, other lesser-known privateers and outlaws also frequented Hancock County. Among the more obscure are Pierre Remaux and Calico Dick and the more familiar James Copeland.

## **PIERRE REMAUX**

Pierre Remaux was not the man's birth name, and in fact two spellings of his assumed name have been found: Remaux and Rameau. His original surname was McCullough. Although he was born in Scotland into a pros-

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**PRESIDENT'S  
 MESSAGE**

The dedication and opening of the new bridge in May was a very welcome event—another milestone on our road to recovery. Even though progress may seem slow, it is, nonetheless, progress!

The main topic of my message this month is preparation for our annual Halloween Tour. Even though it may seem that Halloween is far off, we must begin planning now to have a successful event. If you can volunteer to help us, please do so. We will need actors/actresses to portray former residents of the area who are buried in Cedar Rest Cemetery, guides for the tour, hosts/hostesses to work in the Lobrano House during the tour, and cemetery personnel to set up and remove the candlelit path of the tour through the cemetery. Please call the Lobrano House at 467-4090 to volunteer. Help us make this year's event one of the very best.

*Melinda*

*(Continued from p. 1)*

perous family, this son of a Presbyterian minister emigrated to the United States. Well-educated, fearless, and ambitious, McCullough moved to New Orleans and lived in one of its best houses under the assumed name of Colonel Loring.

He claimed to be a mine owner and operator from Mexico.

However, McCullough's dreams of becoming rich and powerful were not fulfilled by his supposed mine operations. These aspirations were reached through his acts of piracy in the Gulf of Mexico. Headquartered in Gainesville, he and his felonious horde did not limit their exploits just to piracy in the Gulf. As Robert G. Scharff states in *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*, "He had fast ships for piracy at sea and desperate men with fast horses for robbery on land." Having absolutely no loyalty to any nation, the law-breakers robbed ships of all nationalities in the Gulf waters. After raiding a ship, the villains slipped into the "no man's land" of the marshes and bayous along the Gulf and the Pearl River. Because of their knowledge of the pitfalls of these waters, the gang members were able to escape anyone who dared follow them into these treacherous byways. To insure their escape, they placed obstructions in the river channels and had guards along the river to protect them.

Even though Remaux was known as the "King of Honey Island," he and his men had other hideouts besides that isle. They had property on the Mississippi side of the Pearl including "caves dug into a bluff at the old Baldwin place south of Pearlington." Supposedly, he also had warehouses in secluded places along the Pearl in which to store his ill-gotten gains.

Remaux was not content to limit his robberies to any one

place, and no one was immune to his piracy. Schraff relates one such incident:

"One of [the robberies] at Bay St. Louis was described in Maurice Thompson's historical novel, [*The King of Honey Island*]. Through his informers, Remaux had learned that a man named Vernon, who lived in a spacious house on the beach, had a considerable amount of gold and gems of great value in his possession. Remaux took three of his men and went to Bay St. Louis. They arrived there just after dark and robbed the man.... Because the man protested so violently during the robbery, Remaux tied him to a chair and set the house on fire. The man's

slaves, who had hidden in terror while the robbery was in progress, rushed in after the robbers left, [sic] and rescued their owner from being burned alive."

The arrival of some law and order to the area did not bring this gang to any sort of justice. They continued to live in their "hidden lairs on Honey Island, and they frequented Gainesville and other river communities."

### CALICO DICK

A second, lesser-known marauder of the Mississippi Gulf Coast was Calico Dick. It's reported that he received this somewhat unusual sobriquet

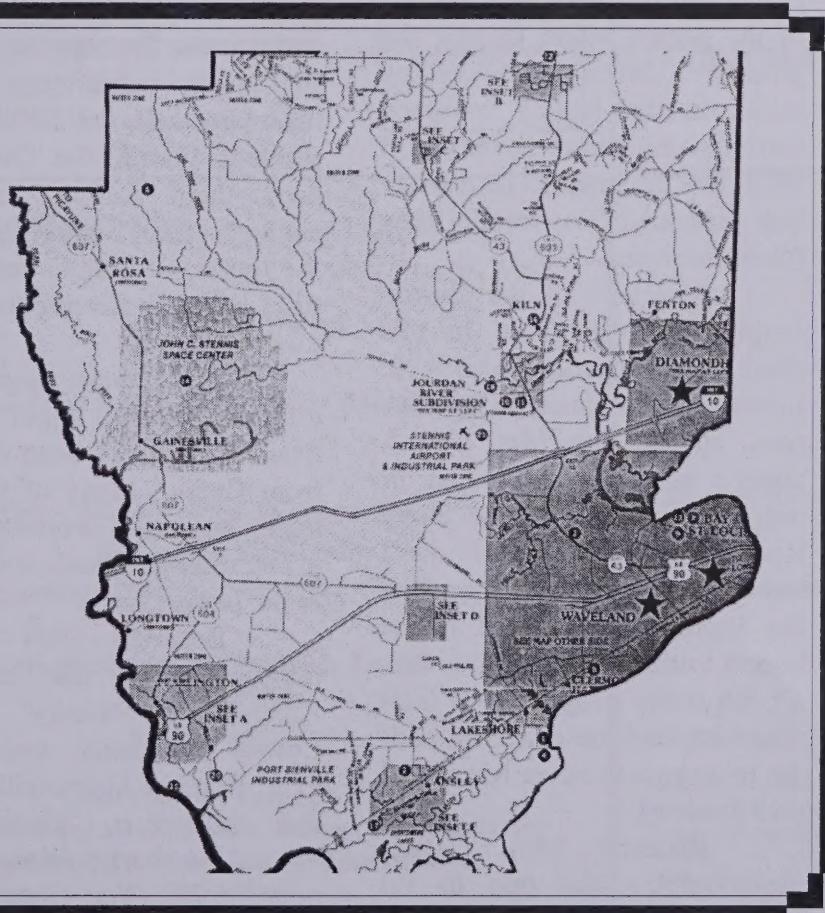
"when he was caught stealing a bolt of calico from a Gainesville store." Like other soldiers of fortune who plundered the ships in the Gulf, Calico Dick fled into the inlets and channels of the Pearl River. Being smaller than the oceangoing vessels, his boat could maneuver these narrower tributaries and elude the pursuing seamen.

Escape into these inlets ultimately became the reason for his capture. After robbing a large freighter, he escaped through these smaller waterways into a "bayou south or southeast of Pearlington," but was pursued by sailors in a small, well-armed craft. He and his gang could not escape, and ultimately they sank their boat with the idea that they'd return later to retrieve their bounty. They were captured, and their fate is unknown as is the fate of their sunken treasure.

### JAMES COPELAND

It would seem that the most widely-known of Mississippi's outlaws is James Copeland. Copeland did not confine his thievery to the shores of the Gulf nor to the Pearl River. He covered a much larger territory from Texas through Louisiana and Mississippi into Alabama and Florida.

Copeland began his outlaw career at the tender age of twelve. Ultimately between this time and his fifteenth birthday, he burned the courthouse at Americus (Jackson County) "to destroy an indictment against him." More mischief, robberies,



Detail of map showing the river area of Hancock County where many of the notorious hid out

and murders followed.

Copeland does, however, have ties to Hancock County because he and his gang used the area "along the Pearl River in Hancock County and nearby as a refuge." Often he used the area in and around Gainesville including Honey Island and Catahoula Creek, east of Hobolochito, as a haven. For long stretches of time, gang members faded into the fabric of everyday life in Hancock County. The Copeland gang did not plunder or bother any of the inhabitants in this area because the sanctuary afforded by the territory was more important to them than any monies they could gain by looting nearby farms and businesses. "One member of the gang, pretending to be a preacher as a cover-up for his criminal activities, stayed at Gainesville for an entire year, and preached regularly while there."

Ultimately, Copeland was captured, convicted, and hanged for his crimes. Yet before his execution in Augusta (Perry County), he made a full confession of his crimes and recounted his exploits to Dr. J. R. S. Pitts, the Sheriff of Perry County.

### TRIO HUNTS TREASURE ON DOWNTOWN BAY LOT

Reprinted from *The Sea Coast Echo* 7/29/65

Spanish dubloons [sic] and pirate treasure were the object of a search recently on Hotel Reed [on] Beach Blvd.

According to an old legend, the yards of the now Gulf View Haven Nursing Home still contain the buried booty of pirate ships which sailed in Bay St. Louis during the days of Spanish rule on the Gulf Coast.

Mrs. Janette Carmichael of Bay St. Louis recalls the legend was verified in the mid-1800's when members of the Alphonse Barron family, who once owned a home and the property on which the Hotel Reed now stands, discovered a churn full of Spanish dubloons [sic] and jewels.

As one of the Barrons' sons told Mrs. Carmichael in 1920, the three Barron children, Gerald, Stanley and Ernest, were playing in the stables when one of the horses began to paw the ground. Noticing a yellow streak in the freshly loosened earth the children ran over to kill what they assumed to be a snake but instead of a reptile they found treasure.

Members of the Barron family no longer live in this area, but Earl Ramond of Bay St. Louis, who is related to the Barrons, agrees with Mrs. Carmichael's account. "Whether or not there is gold on the Hotel Reed property today, I don't know," Ramond said, "but that the Barrons found gold is the honest truth." "The Barrons didn't tell many people about their discovery and the exact value of the treasure was never revealed," said Ramond.

Recently Mrs. Carmichael related the tale to Ed Brown, visitor to Bay St. Louis from Clarksdale, Tenn. He was

intrigued by the story and asked if he could search the old Barron home site with a Geiger counter. Receiving permission from Mr. and Mrs. David Smallwood, present owners, Brown and Carmichael set out to explore the grounds.

Though not completely successful in their treasure hunt, they did uncover several objects of the past—an old tin can and two chipped and worn axe blades.

### PROHIBITION AND HANCOCK COUNTY

By  
Eddie Coleman

Mississippi proclaimed itself a "dry" state in 1908-1909 and was the first state to ratify the Eighteenth Amendment. Seizing the opportunity to fulfill a need, residents along the Gulf Coast used their fishing vessels to smuggle the "demon rum" into the state. Other enterprising folks began making moonshine to turn a buck.

Rumrunners began smuggling the illegal liquor from islands in the Caribbean especially from Cuba. Many of them met ships bearing European alcohol off the barrier islands and brought in the bounty.

Between 1908 and the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment, "thirsty" Hancock County residents crossed the Pearl River at Gainesville to visit the numerous "floating bar rooms" on the Louisiana side especially the *Blue Goose*. Often county residents drank their fill and returned with saddlebags full

of the drink.

Other residents of the area made "shopping" trips to New Orleans to imbibe and "make groceries" of alcoholic beverages for personal use and for entertaining.

In his book, *The Mississippi Gulf Coast*, Charles Sullivan gives the following account of moonshine in the Kiln during the time of national Prohibition:

"Probably the best-known Mississippi town in the North during the Roaring Twenties was the Hancock County village of Kiln, from which the Chicago-based Capone Gang secured vast quantities of 'Kiln Lightning.' From time to time 'revenoos' discovered whole rail cars loaded with just enough pine lumber to conceal hundreds of cases of liquor or truckloads of 'corn squeezings' nesting under egg cartons. In just one 1923 raid near Kiln,

federal agents captured four cookers, one of them 'a 300 gallon fellow—looking like the grandfather of all the stills.'"

Even though "some spectacular hauls" were made in the area by federal officials, the greater share of the illegal liquor reached its intended destination.

SOURCES FOR THIS MONTH'S ARTICLES:

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Thigpen, S. G. *Highway to Glory Land*. Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1965



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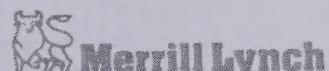
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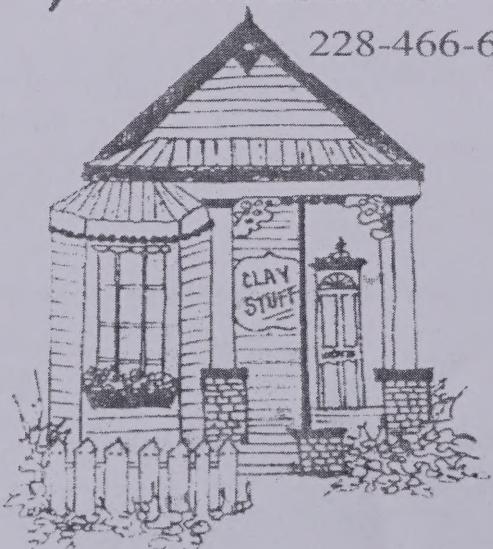
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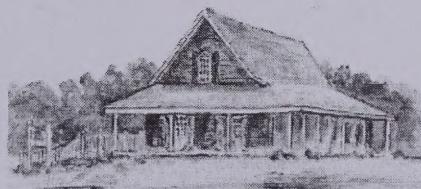
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